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REMARKS

In the Office Action dated October 20, 2005, claims 1 - 6 and 8 - 42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e).

By this Amendment, certain claims have been amended to more particularly describe the features which the Applicant regards as the invention. Claims 5, 7, 8, 11, 15 - 35, 35 - 40 and 42 are cancelled as the features thereof have been incorporated into other claims. New claims 43 - 51 have been added separately to claim the features of claim 9, 34, and 41 in dependent form from independent claims 10, 12, and 14.

For the reasons set forth below, it is respectfully submitted that all rejections have been overcome. Reconsideration is, therefore, respectfully requested.

In the Office Action dated October 20, 2005, which has been marked "Final" by the Examiner, claims 1 - 6 and 8 - 42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Thackston. The Examiner contends that all the claimed features are taught by Thackston. The Examiner specifically contends that Thackston teaches an electronic collaboration center on a computer network for the time disjointed electronic interaction of authorized individuals on a project by teaching that the prime contractor or other approved authority may approve proposed modifications to the preliminary baseline part design model based on recommendations made by the design team and analysis teams. Thackston does provide for time disjointed or time independent interaction by various entities on a project. However, this is nothing more than a conventional interactive computer system accepting inputs from a number of different individuals.

Applicant's invention as set forth in claim 1, and the claims depending therefrom, uniquely defines a method of establishing a plurality of information modules in an interactive computer system to control at least two or more project features or variables. An electronic collaboration center is created in one of the modules. A

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collaboration is defined in the collaboration center and includes a leader and a collaboration summary and at least one of a purpose, action plan, and deadline. Input information is accepted at the collaboration center from authorized individuals relating to the purpose, plan or deadline for the collaboration. The collaboration in the collaboration center is used for planning and resolving a collaboration purpose.

Thackston does not teach the establishment of a collaboration center in a computer system module for conducting a collaboration relating to one feature or issue of the project.

Applicant's collaboration center could be used by the project leader to frame an issue, such as a change in the project time schedule. The collaboration center is the single location for information from authorized individuals pertaining to the defined collaboration issue. In this manner, the collaboration in the collaboration center enables a project issue to be quickly and easily resolved in a time disjointed manner but at a single location where all input and output information flow pertaining to the collaboration issue is contained.

Thackston is devoid of any such feature for problem resolution and relies on the entire system for progressing project items to completion. In Thackston, for a particular issue, team members must search for information in many modules to find all of the important data, rather than in a single collaboration center as taught by the Applicant.

Since Thackston is devoid of any such collaboration center for conducting a collaboration on a project issue, it is respectfully submitted that Applicant's invention as set forth in claim 1, and the claims depending therefrom, includes features which are not anticipated by Thackston.

The uniqueness of Applicant's invention is further set forth in claim 4 wherein the collaboration center accepts votes of authorized individuals for the issue

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defining the collaboration. This enables the project leader to make a decision on an issue which is based, at least in part, on the votes.

With respect to Applicant's invention as set forth in claim 9, Applicant's method provides bi-directional electronic mail interaction between authorized individuals and the information modules. In Thackston, any e-mail from the system to the user is for notification only. In Applicant's invention, the bi-directional interaction enables the computer system to act on information received from an authorized individual to place the information in the correct information module. This bi-directional interaction also forms a basis for the collaboration voting as set forth in claim 4.

In claim 10, Applicant uniquely defines his method as linking each of the information modules for bi-directional data interchange between each module, providing a project plan having a plurality of items, linking each item to a set of tasks, linking any item and task to an issue describing a problem and a call for action, and linking all of the information and actions associated with the issue to the project plan item.

This bi-directional module interconnectivity solves a problem found in Thackston which requires that team members search for related data in multiple modules. Thackston does provide that several modules may interact with the same data, namely, the part design.

In Applicant's invention as defined in claim 10, specific items in one module are linked to specific items in other modules in a direct association. This bi-directional linking provides team members with the ability to navigate up and down the information hierarchy in an easy manner such that all information relating to a particular project attribute or item can be easily obtained by following and clicking on the links. This provides for easy and efficient project history retrieval as well.

Thackston is devoid of any teaching of such associativity of module linking, but rather teaches data linking which is common in computer systems, such as a

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document attachment to an e-mail. For these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that Applicant's invention as set forth in claim 10, and the claims depending therefrom, includes features which are lacking in Thackston.

With respect to Applicant's invention as set forth in claim 12, Applicant's method uniquely enables the project leader to define a plurality of organizational categories and then specify the name of at least one request recipient for each category to receive an information request in a specific category. This enables a request for information to be sent directly to the one person most knowledgeable or most able to provide the requested information. In Thackston, on the other hand, any request for information requires the requestor to know the name of the one recipient most likely to have the information.

For this reason, it is respectfully submitted that Applicant's invention as set forth in claim 12 patentably defines over Thackston and is not anticipated thereby.

Applicant's invention as set forth in claim 13 provides a closed loop system which controls the delivery, delegation and reply of a request for information from a requestor to a designated request recipient and any subsequent delegated recipient.

Upon the issuance of a request for information or for a project data review, the request is sent to a designated request recipient, as defined by the project leader. The designated recipient can reply directly to the requestor or delegate the request to a designated delegate recipient. Applicant's method uniquely provides a response from the designated delegate recipient to be sent to the requestor in one of two routes, namely, directly from the designated delegate recipient to the requestor, or to the requestor indirectly through the designated request recipient who can perform interim review and approval.

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Applicant's method provides a unique closed loop system which includes the features of delegation and interim review. Applicant's method controls and monitors the response system and progress of a request for information.

Since Thackston is devoid of any teaching of these features, it is respectfully submitted that Applicant's invention as set forth in claim 13 patentably defines over Thackston and is not anticipated thereby.

With respect to claim 14, Applicant defines a method which includes a closed loop response workflow sequence to a request for project review. Applicant's method set forth in claim 14 uniquely provides for the request to be routed to multiple recipients along with enabling the request to be routed in parallel to all of the recipients at once or in series in a sequential order of recipients.

Thackston teaches an open ended request system which does not have any monitoring features as taught by the Applicant.

Since Thackston is devoid of the features set forth in claim 14, it is respectfully submitted that Applicant's invention as set forth in claim 14 patentably defines over Thackston and is not anticipated thereby.

New claims 42 – 45 have been added to depend from claim 10. New claims 46 – 48 have been added to depend from claim 12. And new claims 49 – 51 have been added to depend from claim 14. Claims 43, 46, and 49 are identical to claim 9. Claims 44, 47 and 50 are identical to claim 34. Claims 45, 48 and 51 are identical to claim 41.

New claims 43 – 51 are submitted to patentably define over the cited references for the same reasons as set forth above with respect to their respective independent claims.

Applicant's invention as set forth in claims 9, 34, 43, 44, 46, 47, 49, and 50 uniquely provides for direct communication with a module by way of reply to an e-mail that is sent by the module. Thackston teaches that e-mail is used to provide

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notifications to team members. Thackston does not provide for the bi-directional nature of e-mails where the members interact with and respond to modules in request simply by replying to the e-mail.

In Applicant's invention, upon receipt of the e-mail reply, the module automatically updates the burden and information and the display of that information. Thackston teaches a closed-end notification where responding to the notification or request requires logging into the computer system, invoking the appropriate module, clicking on the particular item, and then responding to it. Applicant's invention provides a single step, off-line response method which is lacking in Thackston.

For the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that Applicant's invention as set forth in the claims includes features which are not anticipated by Thackston. Therefore, all of the pending claims are submitted to be in condition for allowance; a notice of which is respectfully requested.

Entry of this Amendment under the provisions of Rule 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 is submitted to be warranted and is respectfully requested. By this Amendment, certain claims have been amended to include the features set forth in other dependent claims which have then been cancelled. Thus, the issues for appeal or further examination are reduced. Further, the Amendments made to the claims have been previously considered by the Examiner in a substantially similar form. As such, it is submitted that the claim amendments do not raise new issues which would require a new search or consideration by the Examiner. In addition, the Applicant has cancelled more claims than the number of new claims added by this Amendment.

Further, since the claim amendments, for the reasons set forth above, place the claims in condition for allowance, it is respectfully submitted that consideration and entry of this Amendment under the provisions of Rule 37 C.F.R. 1.116 is warranted and such is respectfully requested.

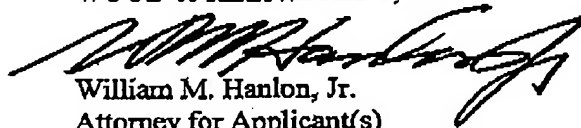
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If the Examiner believes that any claim would be placed in a better condition for allowance by further amendments, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's attorney at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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